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Building blocks for a world without nuclear weapons

Working paper submitted by Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Ukraine

Basic vision

1. The international community shares the goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. States may differ on the means or sequencing for achieving that goal. However, in order to move forward in nuclear disarmament and ultimately to eliminate the risk of catastrophic humanitarian consequences from the use of nuclear weapons, the international community should focus not on differences but on common ground by identifying concrete and practical "building blocks" for that shared goal.

2. A focus on "building blocks" can complement the pursuit of a "step by step" approach. It foresees the possibility of parallel and simultaneous steps. While ultimate measures for achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons will need to be multilateral, effective disarmament will require mutually reinforcing "building blocks" that are multilateral, plurilateral, bilateral or unilateral. Ensuring the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons will also create an appropriate climate as disarmament and non-proliferation represent two sides of the same coin.

3. In addition to past bilateral and unilateral "building blocks", including the significant reductions in the global nuclear-weapon stockpile since its peak in the 1980s, there are already in place a number of multilateral "building blocks" in support of achieving and maintaining a world without nuclear weapons. These include the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the Outer Space Treaty, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Sea-bed Arms Control Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, as well as the multilateral disarmament machinery. More "building blocks" are required.

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4. The challenging reality is that there will be no quick fixes if our goal is effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. But we must seek to maintain steady progress. If we take into account the prevailing international environment, progress in multilateral nuclear disarmament requires promotion of practical, effective and confidence-building measures. To this end, it is vital to avoid fragmentation of the international community which would delay the entire process of nuclear disarmament. Multilateral nuclear disarmament processes will need to be as inclusive as possible, particularly through the involvement of States possessing nuclear weapons. Building a climate for further confidence and trust will be essential to ensure inclusive processes. Such trust must be built through demonstrated implementation of concrete disarmament measures by all States possessing nuclear weapons, as well as ongoing commitment to non-proliferation by all non-nuclear-weapon States.

Practical measures

5. Based on the above basic vision and framed by a clear focus on and commitment to implementation of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty action plan, there are a number of practical, yet concrete near to midterm multilateral actions in support of a world without nuclear weapons that should and can be taken. These include:

- Negotiating a verifiable and non-discriminatory treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices which deals with all relevant questions for the achievement of its purpose
- Pending negotiation and entry into force of such a treaty, maintenance or declaration by all States possessing nuclear weapons of moratoriums on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes
- Designating fissile material no longer required for military purposes and the development of legally binding verification arrangements, within the context of IAEA, to ensure the irreversible removal of such fissile material
- Entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
- Pending the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, maintenance or declaration by all States possessing nuclear weapons of moratoriums on nuclear weapons tests, as well as restraint from the use of new nuclear weapons technologies and from any action that would defeat the object and purpose of that Treaty
- Continued commitment by all States possessing nuclear weapons to fully respect their commitments with regard to security assurances or to extend such assurances if they have not yet done so
- A return to substantive work in the Conference on Disarmament, including on its other nuclear-related core issues, notably dealing with nuclear disarmament and substantive discussion, without limitation, of effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons with a view to elaborating recommendations dealing with all aspects of this issue, not excluding an internationally legally binding instrument

- Supporting and strengthening the IAEA safeguards system, including universal adherence to comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols
- Universalizing the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism
- Continuing work on developing verification schemes, including technical know-how for nuclear disarmament, in order to guarantee that nuclear materials and technology are used for peaceful purposes.

6. Furthermore, many other unilateral, bilateral and plurilateral actions should and can be taken. These include:

- Increasing the transparency of nuclear arsenals and fissile material in stockpiles
- Dismantling or converting for peaceful uses facilities for the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices
- Reducing the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons
- Reducing the number of non-strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons
- Promoting plurilateral or multilateral nuclear reduction negotiations with prior commitment to freezing the number of deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons
- Reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and further reducing the risk of an accidental or unauthorized launch of nuclear weapons
- Strengthening nuclear-weapon-free zones and creating new nuclear-weapon-free zones, including in pursuit of Non-Proliferation Treaty universalization
- Promoting disarmament and non-proliferation education including on humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons.

7. In due course towards a world without nuclear weapons, it will be necessary to give further thought, with a longer perspective, to how a multilateral nuclear disarmament framework or a nuclear weapons convention would look like as the final "building block". The prevailing environment of trust and confidence will influence the development of that final measure and must remain an important consideration as we continue to move towards our shared goal. All States, and in particular but not exclusively those possessing nuclear weapons, have a responsibility in shaping that environment.